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PAGE 001

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 FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
 TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8107
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE 682
 INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE 479
 RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 477
 RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 553
 RRUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE 476
 RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 618
 RUFHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 56
 RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE 57
 RUEADWW/WHITEHOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
 BT
 S E C R E T BEIRUT 5534

EXDIS

FROM HABIB

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PINT, PEPR, MILI, MOPS, LE, IS, SY, XF, PLO
 SUBJECT: HABIB MISSION: BASHIR GEMAYEL'S THREAT

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ONLY HOURS AFTER THE ISRAELI CABINET MADE ITS
 POSITIVE DECISION, AND EVEN WHILE THE IDF AND LAF
 HAD COME TO A GOOD UNDERSTANDING REGARDING THE LAF

SECRET

State Dept. review completed

SECRET

STATE

82 9281704 SSO

PAGE 002
TOR: 192344ZAUG 82

NC 9281704

TAKEOVER OF THE PORT OF BEIRUT TOMORROW NIGHT, A MAJOR NEW COMPLICATION AROSE WHICH THREATENS TO JEOPARDIZE EVERYTHING WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER. BASHIR GEMAYEL IS THINKING OF TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT THE LAF DEPLOYMENT IN THE PORT TOMORROW NIGHT AND, FOR THAT MATTER, THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE FRENCH MNF UNIT ON SATURDAY MORNING, AUGUST 21.

3. BASHIR'S REASONING IS AS FOLLOWS:

-- MANY SUNNI MUSLIM FIGURES, IN PARTICULAR SA'B SALAM, INTEND TO BOYCOTT ANY MEETING OF PARLIAMENT SO AS TO FORESTALL A QUORUM; IN THIS WAY, THEY INTEND TO FRUSTRATE THE POSSIBILITY THAT BASHIR WOULD BE ELECTED PRESIDENT.

-- IF THIS WERE NOT ENOUGH, THE SYRIANS, PALESTINIANS, AND LEFTISTS ARE APPLYING HEAVY PRESSURE AND INTIMIDATION TO PREVENT ANY CONVENING OF PARLIAMENT OR, IF IT CONVENES, THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A QUORUM. THE FIRING AND OTHER INCIDENTS NEAR PARLIAMENT YESTERDAY STOPPED A MEETING TODAY; HOWEVER, EXTREMELY HEAVY PRESSURE, THREATS AND INTIMIDATION ARE ALSO BEING PRACTICED BY THE SYRIANS ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY TO PREVENT DEPUTIES FROM ATTENDING.

-- AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE LEADING SUNNI MUSLIM FIGURES IN WEST BEIRUT ARE DESPERATELY ANXIOUS THAT THE WITHDRAWAL PLAN TO THROUGH AND THAT AN MNF COME IN AS PART OF THE PROCESS.

-- SA'B SALAM AND HIS COLLEAGUES DESPERATELY WANT TO SAVE WEST BEIRUT; BUT HE, BASHIR, WANTS TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT AND PURSUE HIS VISION OF FORMING A STRONG GOVERNMENT.

-- THEREFORE, BASHIR'S STRATEGY IS TO POSTPONE THE ENTRY OF THE MNF AND THE PLO WITHDRAWAL UNTIL THE SUNNI OPPOSITION HAS AGREED TO ALLOWING PARLIAMENT TO MEET WITH A QUORUM SO THAT THE ELECTION CAN BE HELD. THE PARLIAMENT IS TO CONVENE AT A NEW LOCATION ON MONDAY, AUGUST 23, AND BASHIR IS WORKING TO FORESTALL THE BEGINNING OF A PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL OPERATION

SECRET

SECRET

STATE

82 9281704 SSO

PAGE 003
TOR: 192344ZAUG 82

NC 9281704

UNTIL AT LEAST TUESDAY.

4. BASHIR SENT TANKS AND MEN TO THE PORT, APPARENTLY IN THE EARLY EVENING, AND CONFRONTED GENERAL EITAN. HARSH WORDS WERE REPORTEDLY EXCHANGED, WITH EITAN TELLING BASHIR HE WAS UPSETTING THE ENTIRE APPLE CART.

5. I WILL NOT RECOUNT HERE THE ARGUMENT I MARSHALLED AGAINST THIS DISASTROUS, COUNTERPRODUCTIVE STRATEGY ON WHICH BASHIR HAS BEEN EMBARKED. SARKIS FIRST INFORMED ME OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY EVENING, AND I URGED UPON HIM, BUTRUS, AND ABDU THAT THIS NOT BE ALLOWED TO TAKE PLACE. LATER IN THE EVENING, I SPENT AN HOUR AND 45 MINUTES WITH BASHIR AND ABDU TOGETHER. I BELIEVE I SHOOK BASHIR UP A BIT. WHEN HE LEFT, HE PROMISED TO THINK OVER WHAT I SAID CAREFULLY. HOWEVER, HE IS A DETERMINED MAN WHO SEES HIS CHANCE FOR THE PRESIDENCY SLIPPING AWAY. HE MAY SHIFT HIS TACTICS AND TRY TO GET SARKIS TO ALTER THE REQUEST FOR THE MNF UNTIL AT LEAST AFTER THE MONDAY SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT. THIS FORM OF PRESSURE WILL NOT BE SO EASY TO APPLY OVER EXPECTED CABINET OPPOSITION.

6. TEL AVIV FOR AMBASSADOR LEWIS: I SUGGEST YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH DAVID KIMCHE AS EARLY IN THE MORNING AS POSSIBLE TO REVIEW THESE DEVELOPMENTS. IT IS CERTAIN THAT KIMCHE WILL HAVE BEEN INFORMED ABOUT THEM BY THEN, AND HE MAY HAVE ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE TO OFFER. KIMCHE IS ONE OF THE RELATIVELY FEW ISRAELIS WHO WILL UNDERSTAND FULLY THE INTRICACIES AND COMPLICATIONS IN THIS EXTRAORDINARY LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE. I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENCOURAGE THE ISRAELIS -- THROUGH KIMCHE -- TO PERSUADE BASHIR AWAY FROM THIS COURSE OF ACTION. WHATEVER YOU CAN REPORT TO ME, I WILL USE IN MY FURTHER EFFORTS DURING THE DAY.

DILLON

END OF MESSAGE

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